

VZCZCXRO1924
OO RUEHAG
DE RUEHDM #4025 2281357
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 161357Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0999
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0180
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 004025

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PARIS FOR WALLER, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [SY](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SYRIA REJECTS MEETINGS WITH ICRC PRESIDENT, ICRC
REP MEETS MISH'AL

REF: DAMASCUS 2684

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary: ICRC President Jakob Kellenberg cancelled a planned August trip to Syria after the SARG refused to offer him any high-level meetings, according to Damascus-based ICRC representative Jean-Jacques Fresard. Fresard described noted that in during a recent encounter with Hamas leader Khalid Mish'al, he had insisted with no success that the ICRC had the right to see kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, being held by Hamas in Gaza. End Summary.

¶2. (C) SARG REJECTS HIGH-LEVEL ICRC MEETINGS:
Damascus-based ICRC representative Jean-Jacques Fresard told Poloff on August 16 that ICRC President Jakob Kellenberg did not come to Syria on August 12 as expected because the SARG denied ICRC's meeting requests, including with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and VP Farouk al-Shara'a, consenting only to a meeting with the State Minister for Red Crescent Affairs. This rendered a Kellenberg stop in Damascus pointless, said Fresard, interpreting the SARG's response as a sign of anger over the ICRC's successful efforts to get Israel's Magen David Adom into the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in June. Fresard noted he had originally proposed that Kellenberg tack on Syria to the end of a visit to Lebanon and Israel, as a way to follow up on issues including ICRC's long-standing request to visit political prisoners in Syrian jails and the ICRC's work in facilitating passage of Syrian nationals -- primarily university students and pilgrims -- who need to cross into Syria from the occupied Golan Heights.

¶3. (S) ICRC REP MEETS EXTERNAL HAMAS LEADER: Fresard shook his head at the SARG's attitude, noting, for instance, that external Hamas leader Khalid Mish'al had agreed to a meeting with Fresard a week ago in Syria to discuss issues that included Gaza, Hamas' military actions against Israel, as well as the status of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Fresard said that he had explained to Mish'al that, under international conventions, the ICRC should be allowed to see Shalit and pass him letters from his mother. Mish'al did not take the letters but listened carefully, according to Fresard. Mish'al told Fresard that Hamas would stop firing rockets at Israel if Israel stopped killing Palestinian civilians.

¶4. (C) ICRC SEEKING HELP MOVING AID TO WESTERN IRAQ:
Fresard raised with Emboffs again the issue of a proposed humanitarian relief convoy via the Syrian Al-Bukamal border crossing to the predominately Sunni area of Al-Qa'im in

western Iraq, which the ICRC has been trying to reach for months (reftel). The obstacle to the idea remains unclear, Fresard said.

CORBIN